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THE PROBLEM OF LABOR IN THE PHILIPPINES

BY F. WELLS WILLIAMS

Yale University

While the retention of the Philippines as a dependency is still a debatable issue, the principles upon which our government there is based are generally endorsed by the American people. These principles assume our responsibility for the welfare, present and future, of a backward race which has come under our control through the most extraordinary accident in modern history; they promise that the race thus appropriated shall be preserved from enemies without and discord within until such time as it may be prepared to maintain its autonomy; they deny the ancient theory that dependencies may be legitimately exploited for the benefit of a controlling state. However sincerely one may deplore the action of President McKinley's administration which brought this burden upon the nation, criticism of an accomplished fact has no bearing upon the problems involved in carrying out a policy necessitated by these principles. They involve a task which is onerous, but they imply an altruism the exercise of which appeals to American idealism. We are called a practical people. We are so in the material development of our territory and in the ordering of our communities built up during a century of rapid exploitation; but no one who understands the national psychology can fail to recognize the tenacity with which Americans cling to certain commonly accepted ideals. Our national history begins with a revolt against overwhelming odds in behalf of an ideal. Every one of our wars has been undertaken in defence of a professed ideal, and whatever opposition their declaration incurred has been avouched in the name of sentiment and morality. The abolition of slavery, the expedition sent to open Japan, the abundant funds subscribed for missionary propaganda and the devout proposal to abolish war are patent and familiar instances of a trait that more profoundly characterizes the American than any other modern people.

It is desirable to affirm this characteristic of our countrymen in order to comprehend the nature of such conditions as have been launched against the efforts thus far made to improve the Philippines. When

confined to the work in hand—apart from recriminations concerning the events of 1898—these criticisms do not venture to impugn the justice of the principles underlying our policy; with these all fair-minded Americans are satisfied.¹ They attack the means employed to enforce this policy, and in such details as are involved in a great constructive work there are opportunities for fair-minded men to disagree. This paper is undertaken with no desire to enter upon the controversies that have arisen from such attacks. It attempts to separate the theory from its application, to ignore for the moment the right or the folly of a nation to acquire control over an alien and defenceless people, not because the moral and political question lacks importance, but because we are confronted now, in Mr. Cleveland's immortal phrase, with a condition, not a theory. The control has been acquired, and unless a political revolution in America ensues the only discussion profitable to the economist and the statesman concerns the manner in which we exercise that control. From this point of view the time required for the fulfillment of the pledge made to ourselves of ultimately releasing the Filipinos from a condition of tutelage is so considerable as to leave a determination of the date of full independence to another generation.

While it must be conceded that prolonged disputes over the tenure of our occupation necessarily imperil the success of the administration of Philippine affairs and retard the progress of our efforts to educate the people, the fact remains that those in charge of this difficult business are compelled to prosecute their trust on the theory that it will be continued to its completion. For them to act otherwise would be at once cowardly and cruel, and it is as difficult as it would be ungenerous to suspect the civil and military officers employed in those islands of being either. In order, therefore, to advance to a consideration of the practical execution of the abstract principles upon which we rest our claim to occupy the islands we must accept the continuance of our tenure there as a major premise of our theories.

The operations of a civilized government may be comprised under two groups, those of political control and of economic development. In the first are found the executive, legislative and representative machinery,

¹ "A more highminded course for a great and powerful nation to pursue toward a weak and dependent people whom the fortunes of war had cast into her hands can hardly be imagined. I believe that it is wholly unique in history, and I venture the prediction that it will remain so for a long time to come. Charity and altruism among nations are not nearly so contagious as with individuals."—W. Morgan Shuster, *Journal of Race Development*, I, p. 60.

national and local, and the necessary agencies for securing revenue, justice and defence. In the second may be roughly classified the various means by which a people under such a government seek what our forefathers called "the pursuit of happiness." They comprise the advancement of commerce and industry, education, communication, sanitation, the natural resources and labor of the country. In a country such as ours where existing standards of civilization have been reached through the slow process of evolution, economic development has been left to the care of the people themselves. This is less true of the states of continental Europe, where most of these forms of activity are already superintended if not controlled by government, and we are reminded by recent experience, both abroad and at home, that the interests of all the people can be preserved only through a perpetual watchfulness over their further development by the administrative power. We are advancing from a social status, where even the agencies for securing justice, revenue and defence were left more or less to the individual to acquire and retain as he could, toward that stage where no rights of ownership or regulation will be recognized except those of the state.

The general laxity of authority in America as compared with other nations in Christendom opposes at first sight an almost insuperable obstacle to our solution of the problem presented by the Philippines in conformity to an academic theory such as this, but an abiding trust in the essential logic of our idealism and the determined righteousness of the nation as a whole prompts the comfortable hope that, though we may fall into occasional inconsistencies and be misled by passing controversies, we will pursue the thankless task of training a whole people to take a secure place in the family of nations. Success in this endeavor depends primarily upon our comprehension of the basic elements of the proposition before us. The inhabitants of the Philippines cannot possibly be expected of their own accord to follow the good advice given them or to copy any model of government unlike that to which they have been accustomed. They have no traditions of high culture, no habits of self restraint, no practice in the exercise of responsible government. More than this, they have not even been welded into a national group by the impact of aggressive neighbors, while the paternalism of Spain and the facility with which nature assures them a bare living have combined to keep the intellectual and material standard of society at a low level. They possess no literary or institutional foundation as in China or India for the development of an indigenous culture into something hardy enough to hold its own against

the aggressiveness of the western world. No reflection upon the character of the people need be implied in this statement; they stand among the older culture groups of the world as children in society, potential members of the family of nations, into the company of which they can be safely admitted when they are prepared to play the part of men with some understanding of a man's responsibilities.

This, then, is the plan of benevolent assimilation which seems to be approved by the conscience of the American people. Consistency in carrying it out demands far more scientific consideration of the economic factors involved in the organization of a state than has been bestowed upon the same elements of our industrial life at home. The novelty of this necessity has aroused some opposition among those who cannot easily understand why grown men should not be able to keep a path of progress in one part of the globe as well as another, but so long as we prefer this rather painful service to the alternative of casting the Filipino people adrift we are compelled to think out their problems for them. To this end, after establishing order in the Islands, we have proceeded to improve their physical condition by drainage, hospitals and sanitary measures, so far as funds were available, that readily commend themselves to all concerned. The same acquiescence generally attends the means adopted to improve communication by roads, railways, steamers and telegraphs between different parts of the Islands, the chief criticism upon these undertakings being that enough has not been expended in this way. Commerce, manufactures, agriculture, mining and lumbering together constitute the sources of wealth to be so judiciously administered that the Islands may continue as a going concern, while the education of the people who are to use their property is undertaken for the purpose of enabling them to profit by it in the right way. The relations between these factors in the economic problem before us are sufficiently obvious; the unknown element yet to be determined is the amount and quality of the labor that is available for the successful exploitation of a territory which must be made increasingly productive in order to sustain a population that grows both in numbers and in its desires for the best things in life.

This summary of the main elements of the economic situation in the Philippines leads to the conclusion that our problem is almost wholly comprised in the one question of labor. If the hands can be brought to the work and applied intelligently to exploiting the Islands there is reasonable assurance of their prosperity and of a happy outcome to our great enterprise; without an adequate supply of labor the economic dis-

tress resulting from the burden of taxation due to operating a costly administration system, from the refusal of capital to participate, and from the disgust of American taxpayers confronted with annual deficits, will inevitably culminate in the failure of all of our beneficent intentions and an untimely surrender of an unprofitable possession. To put the matter in another way, the issue involved in our holding the Philippines is not political or ethical or strategic—though these materially affect the event—but economic. If the venture prospers financially the Filipinos will be contented and the moral questions which vex the souls of some of us will disappear like mists in the morning.

An undeveloped country in a primitive stage of civilization may be exploited by forced labor—slavery or the *corvée*—by imported labor, or by training its inhabitants to do the necessary work for their own profit. The first of these methods may be dismissed as impossible today, even in the modified serfdom of the *corvée*. The second involves securing laborers who can work profitably in a tropical climate which excludes the European labor market as a source of supply. The last requires patience and time. Under the same conditions that confront us in the Philippines, England is the only nation that has tried the importation of contract labor on a considerable scale, and Holland the only one that has attempted to train a large indigenous population to labor regularly under scientific control. France has met with no inconsiderable success in Indo China in directing a peaceable and industrious people to support life, but these people did not have to be taught to work, their country offers few natural resources except a fertile soil, and the dependency has thus far proved commercially unprofitable, so that no lessons of great value can be drawn from her rather brief and limited experience.

The English have replenished several of the old slaveholding crown colonies with indentured labor from India, and where the population does not insure an adequate labor supply the result has been satisfactory. In South Africa the plan has met with strenuous opposition, and the self-governing colonies will have none of it. Success with this system seems to imply the practically complete extinction of the former labor supply—the result of emancipation in the British slave colonies—and the ability of the Indian government to enforce protective regulations which render the lot of the Tamil plantation hand when abroad about as fortunate as that of any man of his class in the world. There is no such collapse of labor supply in the Philippines as that which paralyzed the sugar islands of Great Britain sixty years ago; and again, it is extremely doubtful if the British would allow the engagement of inden-

tured laborers from India in a country where they could not secure the fulfilment of the very severe conditions under which they are safeguarded in their own colonies.²

For these reasons and because of the strong prejudice of Americans against indentured labor it does not appear probable that this system deserves or will receive much attention as an expedient for supplying the labor demand in our dependencies. There remain the alternatives of voluntary immigration or laborers imported under contract. Continental Asia, as has been seen, is practically the only source from which immigrants fitted for tropical labor can be expected; but we have barred out the Chinese immigrant workman by extending our exclusion laws so as to cover our dependencies, and there is little prospect of any change in our attitude affecting such prohibition.³ The same objections obtain, it may be added, against all Asiatics, but as there is no menace in free immigration from India, and the Japanese have thus far shown little desire to undergo the hardships of toil in a tropical climate, our concern in the matter is practically limited to the Chinese. While a few employers in the Philippines are still willing to advocate an unrestricted admission of the Chinese in order to develop the resources of the region, the opinion of a majority of Europeans there seems to endorse the wisdom of restriction as a policy and confine their proposals in the matter to admitting them under contract for specific undertakings.⁴ The attitude of these capitalists may be less the result of conviction than a recognition of the deep-rooted and abiding opposition of both Americans and Filipinos to allowing them liberty to come into the Islands as they please; but no one who has studied the growth of the British settlements in the

² Ceylon employs nearly half a million Tamil coolies and the Straits Settlements about 50,000, but all except 5000 of these are independent workers emigrating in search of employment. In these near-by colonies supply and demand are met without the necessity of resorting to the system of indenture.

³ The act of Congress "To prohibit the coming into and regulate the residence within the United States, its territories and all territories under its jurisdiction and the District of Columbia of Chinese and persons of Chinese descent" was passed April 29, 1902. The act to regulate the registration of Chinese in the Philippines in conformity with this act was enacted by the Commission March 27, 1903.

⁴ Governor Taft reports in 1901 the complaint of merchants in the Islands that the labor situation was acute and their determination to send representatives to the United States to ask an amendment to the extension of the exclusion law to the Islands on the ground that the Chinese were necessary for the business development of the country, a proceeding strongly resented by the Filipinos.—*Phil. Com. Report*, 1902, I, p. 21.

Straits and the Archipelago can fail to foresee the result if the Chinese are allowed to settle the labor problem of the Philippines in free competition with the natives while America keeps the peace.⁵ There is no question as to which race is superior in stamina, in ability, or in ethnic endurance.

It is no reflection, therefore, upon the Chinese that we propose to protect the wards of our nation from gradual but inevitable extinction under a race pressure which the Malay would be powerless to resist in his present condition. Whether we are justified in this policy on economic grounds is a question which cannot be profitably debated here. Chinese labor if encouraged might rapidly transform the Islands and fill its waste places with an industrious population—but the people would no longer be Filipinos.⁶ As a nation we have pledged ourselves to arrest, if we can, the operation of one of the laws of nature by withholding the overflow of a stronger stock into an easily accessible area occupied by a weaker. Were the peaceful penetration of the Chinese into the Philippines allowed to take its natural course there is hardly a doubt that

⁵ As a combination of ignorance and vanity characteristic of certain educated Filipinos the following statement of Dr. Dominador Gomez before the Congressional party visiting the Philippines in 1905 is worth quoting. "I should like to state here clearly and plainly, in a manner that will not lend itself to future misinterpretation, that the laboring man, or rather that the Philippine Labor Union which represents thousands of laborers in the country, is not wholly opposed to Chinese immigration; they perfectly understand that a restricted Chinese immigration properly regulated by legislative enactment may benefit the country. The Filipino people are not ignorant of the fact that there is an immense wealth lying in our fields and forests which will remain there until, through labor, it is extracted and utilized. If the Filipino people desire to correspond to the grandeur and splendor which is represented by the American flag and American sovereignty in these Islands, it is their duty not only to develop and exploit the vast natural resources that lie in the soil of these fertile Islands but also to dig deep and search out its hidden treasures. However, we understand that morally and intellectually Chinese immigration cannot produce good morals and good customs in these Islands. The Chinaman even in his physical ailments is worse than the man of any other race; his diseases are extrapathological; that is to say, there is not found in any pathological work the diseases with which the Chinaman suffers, nor do we find the same diseases having as great severity among other peoples as they have among the Chinamen. We here in the Philippines do not desire the Chinaman as a mechanic or as a teacher; we desire him, and this I will say, though it may be an offensive phrase to them—we desire the Chinese here merely and purely as work animals for the cultivation of our fields."—*Hearings before the Secretary of War and the Congressional Party Accompanying Him*. Manila, 1905, p. 50.

⁶ Mr. Foreman declares that "apart from the labor question, if the Chinese were allowed a free entry they would perpetuate the smartest pure Oriental mixed class in the Islands."—*The Philippine Islands*, 3d ed., p. 635.

another century or two would see the transformation of the people of the Islands into a mixed race bearing only a resemblance to the Filipinos of today and adding another group of perhaps thirty millions of resolute workers to the mass of yellow Asiatics.

The policy which the Spanish inaugurated in the hope of saving the souls, we have continued against the Chinese in our solicitude to save the bodies of the Philippine people. By checking the onslaught of Islam from the south and preventing the influx of Confucianist and Buddhist culture from the mainland the Spanish were fairly successful in preserving most of these Islands to Christianity; it remains to be seen whether we shall attain a like success in preserving them for their present inhabitants, but our altruistic principles commit us to the adventure.⁷

Proposals to bring Chinese labor under contract for specific work and limited periods, at the conclusion of which the workmen must be returned to their country, avoid the objections brought against free immigration while offering immediate relief to the scarcity of competent laborers. The testimony of various residents in the Philippines as to the Chinese, taken in 1900 by the commission, was unanimous on the subject of their intelligence and capacity for work, though most of the witnesses were bitterly hostile to them and seemed to agree as to their immorality, their clannishness, and other traits.⁸ Complaints about the Chinese in the Philippines are quite similar to those heard in this country—he does not enter into the social organism, but remains, if left to his own devices, the trader, the middleman, the parasite of society. Nevertheless, the Chinese will work. At the beginning of our experiment in the Islands, when there seemed to be no prospect of inducing natives to undertake a steady job, thoughtful observers saw no other recourse than the Chinese. One of the fairest of these wrote in 1900:

⁷“If no restriction were placed upon their coming, Chinese blood might eventually take the place of the Malayan, and we might then have a Chinese dependency on our hands from which condition we might well seek deliverance. . . . The Chinese infusion, on the whole, turns out a sharp, intelligent, ambitious but untrustworthy individual. . . . Natives unable to get along industrially with these people formed a dislike for them at the outset and seized every opportunity to show it. The rigid exclusion of the Chinese has been one of the articles in every revolutionary propaganda, and had it not been for the large revenues which the Spanish Government received from the Chinese, this hated class would have been at the least deported. . . . The Chinese shows commendable adaptation in his promptness in procuring American tools and food products—just that sort of adaptation which the Filipino lacks.”—Fred. W. Atkinson, *The Philippine Islands*. Boston, 1905, p. 259.

⁸ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1901, II.

The position of the Chinese in the industrial and agricultural life of the Islands is probably one of supreme importance. I am quite disposed to think that the industrial future here depends absolutely upon Chinese labor. I am coming to a belief that the future is hopeless without it. In a way the Filipino is wholly lazy and indolent. In another way he seems industrious. As one goes through the country and sees the Filipino at work in his rice fields and notes the endless amount of tedious work involved in the cultivation of those thousands and thousands of acres, when one notes the processes of plowing, planting, setting, weeding and gathering, and realizes the amount of labor represented and that a vast deal of it is Filipino labor, he can only wonder if this race is so very lazy after all. But rice culture does not involve that continuous, day-in-and-day-out, all-the-year-round labor to which the Filipino evidently has a rooted objection. The Filipinos are far from wholly idle. Even in this land some work is obligatory. Its people are not wholly exempt from the operation of that law which compels the exchange of perspiration for bread. But the labor of the native is desultory, the laborer improvident. The average Filipino has no special object in life beyond maintenance for himself and family from day to day. . . . But the Chinese will work, and therefore is of much interest and concern for the prospective investor here. He is the laborer of the region and the only one. He will labor at anything and will usually do his work faithfully and well—at least, he can be made to if rightly handled. . . . The native might be educated to it in a generation or two, but who is to pay for his education? John is the man, and there are enough of him to be had for all the farms, plantations and estates, for all the mills and factories that will ever be started in the Philippines. But if he be allowed to come here in great numbers the United States will probably stand in the position of an interested participant in a very lively race war between the Mongol and the descendant of the Malay.⁹

There is plenty of evidence to establish the fact that the quality of Chinese labor is superior to any other now available for the tropics. "Compared with the Chinese," says one American of experience in the Philippines,¹⁰ "I should say off-hand that the Filipino is not and never will be anything like as good as the former; the Chinese are, without any question, the best common laborers in the world," and this appears to be the opinion of a great majority of those who know the Far East. They have endurance and persistence, they are adaptable; they have had at home centuries of experience in intensive cultivation, irrigation, fish and poultry raising and in mining. To the objections brought against them in the Philippines that they become shopkeepers instead of

⁹ Albert G. Robinson, *The Philippines, the War and the People*. New York, 1901, p. 389.

¹⁰ Mr. C. R. Welch, of New York, in a letter of November 28, 1913.

farmers it can be argued that in this they act as white men do when opportunity offers, and that this is simply a proof of superior thrift; when they are accused of a disposition to hold their footing and to oust the natives—another characteristic of a superior race—it seems to contradict the other charge often made against them that they cash in their earnings and leave the country without benefit from their accumulated capital. But such strictures, however well substantiated under free immigration, would not apply in the case of contract laborers picked for special undertakings and returned to China without permission to settle in the Islands. It cannot be denied that the Filipino is not developing the enormous and untouched areas of his own country, and that if left alone he never will; an adequate supply of efficient labor promptly brought over to begin the great enterprises now awaiting the onset of ready hands would decidedly increase the material prosperity of the Philippines. From the revenue derived out of new values thus created the whole cost of sanitation and education could be paid within a few years, and the Filipinos of the coming generation be prepared by the industry of the *Chinos* for their task of government temporarily withdrawn from them.

The picture is an attractive one, especially to the theorist and the amateur statesman, but, though a carefully conceived law might secure many of these benefits immediately, the fundamental objections to such legislation are moral and political rather than economic. Race antagonism prevents our employing Chinese in the Islands on any terms. No transient advantages secured in relieving the labor situation could counterbalance a dislike so intense on the part of the natives that they refuse to work with or learn from their more industrious rivals. If brought to the Philippines under the restrictions suggested the presence of Chinese would only tend to delay the instruction of the Filipinos in habits of industry by abating if not removing the stern discipline of necessary toil; it would also involve a repudiation of the moral obligation implied in our denial of the right of a state to selfishly exploit a dependency; it would generate a hatred of the Americans who forced them upon the country, and thereby enormously increase the political complications of our occupation and postpone the date of our withdrawal.

The conclusion reached by this scrutiny of outside sources of labor reveals the fact that for political and other reasons there are no suitable means at our disposal for the development of the Philippines except by their own people. If they can be taught to become steadily industrious the problem of their future is assured so long, at least, as some powerful

nation like ourselves is able and willing to preserve them from foreign conquest and from relapsing into disunion and the tyranny of cacique control. If not, our experiment in nation building is doomed to failure. One other region in modern times that can be compared in area and climate to the Philippines group has been subjected to a *coup d'essai* of a similar sort—that is Java.¹¹ Before examining the material results thus far obtained from our incumbency in the Philippines it is desirable to inquire if the experience of the Dutch may be profitably applied to our problem.

Though long controlled by the Netherlands Java has only been exploited on an economic plan for about a century. As to the basis of Dutch rule the contrast between the Hollander and the Anglo-Saxon is admirably epitomized by a visiting Englishman, Mr. Henry Scott Boys. He says:

The Dutch do not profess to study the well-being of their Javan subjects, save as an object secondary to their own advantage. England expends the whole of her enormous revenue in India and sends not a rupee westward, save for goods purchased, while Holland receives ordinarily from Java, as pure tribute, more than one-third of her colony's income. Holland of set purpose keeps its Eastern subjects as stupid and ignorant as possible. We are scrupulously exact in all our dealings with the natives, insisting on a full wage being paid for all work done, and checking, by all the means in our power, the tendency of all natives in authority to compel labor, while the Dutch have no hesitation in utilizing to the full this tendency and practically draw from this source a large portion of their revenue. The English protect all rights in land however shadowy they may be, and confer others; the Dutch admit no such rights and studiously avoid the introduction of the proprietary principle. We persist in impressing on the native mind that the Western and the Oriental, the heir of Europe's civilization and the successor to Eastern conservatism, are all equal and equally fitted for, and capable of, understanding and of profiting by those social institutions and forms of government to which we ourselves are so attached: the Dutch frankly deny the equality and ridicule the notion that all the world should be ruled on the same principle.¹²

The famous "culture-system" of Daendals and Van den Bosch was based upon the patriarchal character of the native institutions, appor-

¹¹ The British tropical colonies have been exploited by imported labor wherever the metropole has asserted complete control; those of France, Germany and Japan are too recent to offer satisfactory results for comparison. Other nations have done practically nothing.

¹² *Some Notes on Java*. Allahabad, 1892.

tioning work on village plantations under local chiefs, and providing European contractors with labor under regulations that protected the cultivators from force and the employer from fraud. The system had obvious advantages to the island over the lethargy and internecine conflicts which prevailed before it was applied. The population increased from six millions to thirty millions during the century and yielded for many years an enormous surplus to Holland, but the rigor of the system has been abated since 1871 and during the past forty years there has been almost invariably a yearly deficit. Perhaps the best that can be said for the culture system is that while it violated almost every economic law it taught a listless people the lesson of regular work, while protecting them from their hereditary chieftains, from other invaders and from Chinese immigration. An easy-going people living in a luxuriant land under a beneficent climate have been able to endure and survive the severity of their masterful but calculating rulers. Their material prosperity is incomparably greater than it was under Mohammedan domination, and the peasants are not unhappy, but they have been denied their rightful heritage and screened from harm, like domesticated animals only for the benefit of their employers.

In climate, area and race Luzon offers a counterpart to the great southern island of the archipelago; it is not illogical, therefore, to infer that what can be done in the one can be done in the other. Americans will not imitate the Dutch in their principles or their methods, because their training at home has led them to evolve a different political philosophy, but the importance of this comparison lies in one result of Dutch colonization; they have proved that a tropical people can be made to work out their own economic salvation, while the improvement during the process in their safety and happiness is shown by an amazing increase in population. Here is an object lesson which has received suprisingly little attention considering the significant relation of its great truth to the problem before us. It is an answer to the question continually recurring in all the recent literature upon the Philippines. If the Dutch have succeeded by one method it remains for us to show that success can be attained by another which shall not only develop an industrious people in the tropics but so educate them that they will be able ultimately to maintain their independence. Incidentally, this statement of the problem reveals the futility of expecting this double purpose to be attained in a single generation. Holland has spent a century in teaching her Javanese how to develop their plantations under a patriarchal control; are we likely to teach the Filipinos the more difficult lesson of developing a self-

sustaining nation in addition to supplying their own physical needs in a much shorter period?

In one important respect the business before us has been lightened by the work of the Spanish priests. They failed lamentably indeed in their instruction as measured by any high standard, but they saved a majority of the people from the blight of Islam and they prepared them for an understanding of Christian institutions by converting the greater part of them to Christianity. Baneful as it was we cannot justly ignore the result of two centuries of Spanish occupation. On the other hand it must be confessed that the deplorable laxity and injustice of Spanish rule bred vicious propensities in some of their converts from which the sturdy pagans, like the Igorots, who successfully resisted Christianity, are free. Of these propensities we need consider only one—the slothfulness of the natives—because it alone can be made to account for the backward condition of the Islands. The *Philippine Commission Reports*, from the beginning of the series, revert to the melancholy exhibition of this national trait, which to the energetic army officers who first took the natives in hand appeared to be at once the insuperable objection and the unpardonable sin that stood between the native and his chance of redemption. We read in 1901:

They care naught for the morrow nor for leaving to their children and their heirs the means for enjoying a happy future. While there are honorable and frequent exceptions increasing in number every day, it is none the less a fact that in general they refuse to eat bread won by the sweat of the brow, and this in spite of the fact that it is to agriculture the Filipinos owe all there is of value in the general traffic of the Islands.¹³

Attempts to carry on the construction of the famous Benguet road were at first desperately discouraging and nearly drove the engineer to madness. He reports in 1902:

I cannot bring it too strongly to your attention that as a laborer the Filipino is a flat, absolute failure, a man of no energy and less judgment, ignorant, sly, deceitful and lazy, working only because he is forced to do so, caring nothing for the money he gets at the end of the week. He wearily drags through the six days of his martyrdom, and then with a greater alertness than he has exhibited for a whole week sets his face homeward and is seen no more.¹⁴

¹³ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1901, iv, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1902, i, p. 145, Report of N. M. Holmes.

In 1903 he writes that

After three years' constant observation of the Filipino as a laborer I have been unable to discover that chord to his nature which if played upon would excite within him an interest in his work and cause him to apply himself with diligence and intelligence to its performance. The most deplorable quality in the native as a laborer is his absolute and utter indifference to any work to which he may be assigned. . . . Although much time and pains have been taken to teach the native proper methods of work his efficiency is, if anything, less today than two years ago, for he seems of late to have attained a certain independence of spirit whereby he refuses to work at any price, while in previous times he would do so, stubbornly and unwillingly though it might be. . . . The general average of a Filipino laborer is from one-fifth to one-tenth that of an ordinary white laborer's work in America. It is noticeable that a white man's efficiency in this climate does not reach higher than two-thirds that of the ordinary white laborer in America. . . . The Filipino has proved himself to be more expensive than white labor and one might say practically valueless. There is, moreover, a spirit of maliciousness prevailing among these people, leading them to commit many overt acts such as thefts, assaults and willful destruction of property.¹⁵

This was discouraging, but in the light of later experience we realize that American officers were ordered to undertake operations without sufficient study of their nature, and the results were necessarily disappointing. In our hurry to begin we did not stop to read even the scant literature upon the Islands, from which at least some information of value might have been gleaned. The German ethnologist, Blumentritt, who visited the Philippines from 1882 to 1896, had already recorded his opinion that the indolence of the natives was due not to their free choice but because the Spaniards had crushed out all desire to work. He continues:

Dr. Rizal assured me that his people are industrious workers if they may hope for sure profits. This was not the case under the Spanish régime because the monks and officials exercised a very partial mastery, so that it was difficult for the poor to compete with their rich favorites. . . . Germans who have lived both in Japan and the Philippines assert that the Filipino is the equal of the Japanese in many respects, and far his superior in sense of honesty and justice.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1905, iii, pp. 390 ff.

¹⁶ F. Blumentritt, *The Philippines, a Summary Account*, translated by D. J. Doherty. Chicago, 1900, pp. 27 ff.

Some appreciation of the Filipino's experience with government labor and of his state of mind when ordered to do his share of a job under military superintendence might have modified the accepted verdict that the native was "no good." Much credit is due to Governor Taft for the change which gradually transpires in the documentary evidence upon the subject, though his optimism seemed at first to be discredited by recurring instances of the unfitness of Filipino employes. The evidence, he declares, is conflicting; but if the Benguet road was discouraging the Manila Railway Company told him that their line had been constructed entirely by natives, and that Chinese labor on that operation had proved unsatisfactory. He argues with a wisdom long since justified,

I myself am by no means convinced that Filipino labor may not be rendered quite useful. The conditions of war and of disturbance throughout the Islands for six years have led the men to form loafing and gambling habits, and have interfered with their regular life of industry. Where such restlessness prevails industry is apt to be absent. The Filipino laborers must be given three or four years before an intelligent and just verdict can be pronounced upon their capacity for effective labor. I am confident that it will be greatly better than the suffering merchants of Manila anticipate. A just view of the future of labor in these Islands cannot be taken without considering the dependent condition of the Filipino laborers in Spanish times. Much of the labor was then forced, and there was not a single circumstance that gave dignity to it. The transition from such conditions to one where the only motive is gain must necessarily be attended with difficulty; but when the laborer shall come to appreciate his independence, when he shall know that his labor is not to be a badge of peonage and slavery, when American influences shall make him understand the dignity and importance attaching to labor under a free government, we may expect a great change for the better in the supply and character of labor.¹⁷

In the spirit evinced by these expectations efforts were made to encourage the Filipinos to accept employment wherever the army and the government could engage them. At first all labor in the transportation department at Manila was secured through patrones or bosses and paid by the day. Captain Butt, the quartermaster in charge of this affair, soon discovered that the system involved the payment of so large a share of their wages to the patrones as to discourage the workmen from returning to their task. But the bosses had so firm a hold on the labor

¹⁷ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1902, i, p. 24.

market that they were hard to displace. He could say, however, in 1902 that

A continuous warfare on this system of an anterior date has now resulted in a complete alienation of patrone and laborer as far as this department is concerned. The Filipino has become thoroughly convinced that not only is he independent of the patrone, but to be subservient to him is contrary to his own interests. I believe this was largely brought about by paying for the labor first once a week, then twice a month, and later on monthly.¹⁸

Judicious treatment and some attention to fitting laborers for special work soon began to show results in the hopeful accounts from other officers confronted with the same problem. The Commandant of the Navy Yard at Cavite reports in 1903 that

While comparison between Filipino labor and that of Chinamen and others is futile because of the many variable quantities that have different values according to one's point of view, there is no doubt in my own mind that Filipino labor will prove more satisfactory at this station than any foreign labor, and that in the trades it will be satisfactory; that its employment will be of great value to all the people of the province, and indirectly to other parts of the Islands, in educating them to see the advantages of stability and quiet and the opportunities for permanent betterment of their own and their children's lives.¹⁹

On his return to the islands in 1908 Mr. Taft was able to note the improvement in the labor situation and "the eagerness with which the common Filipino laborer sends his children to school." He adds,

The Philippine labor has shown itself capable of instruction, and by proper treatment of being made constant in its application. Of course the prices of labor have largely increased, but the companies constructing the roads have found it wise to increase wages and thereby secure efficiency. Even with increased wages the cost of unit of result is less in the Philippines in the construction of railways than it is in the United States. . . . I think the lesson from the construction of railways is that Philippine labor can be improved by instruction and can be made effective and reasonably economical by proper treatment.²⁰

¹⁸ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1902, i, p. 171.

¹⁹ A. R. Condon, Commandant, in *Phil. Com. Report*, 1903, i, p. 393. But the chief civil engineer, J. T. Norton, in a report on the plan for Luzon railroads, insists at the same time that "there is no possibility of building the proposed lines of railway or any of them within a reasonable length of time except by the importation of Chinese or other foreign labor." *Ib.*, p. 404.

²⁰ *Taft Commission Special Report to the President*, 1908, p. 66.

As experience has improved by longer contact with the people the discoveries of science have enabled us not only to ameliorate their condition but to detect hitherto unsuspected sources of disability. "The Filipino," observes one of the shrewdest American writers on the Philippines, "are both aided and handicapped by receiving not only their government but their civilization ready-made."²¹ The dangers of a too rapid ferment involved in the transformation of the body politic from this bestowal are serious and palpable, but there can be no question of the advantages derived from the application of hygienic knowledge to their well-being. Neither climate nor Spanish misrule can be exclusively blamed for Filipino incompetence. The people everywhere suffer, usually unconsciously, from a plague common in warm countries which has only recently been discovered by science. The commission report in 1909 that

It is an indisputable fact that a very large proportion of the Philippine people are unable, either for lack of proper nourishment or on account of the existence within their systems of intestinal parasites or other diseases, to do an able-bodied man's work. Attention is called to the investigations recently carried out under the auspices of the bureau of health, the bureau of science, and the Philippine Medical School, in the town of Taytay, with the result that almost every person examined was found to harbor intestinal parasites of one or more kinds, and very much more than half of the persons had more than one variety.²²

Scientific care has already eradicated some diseases like small-pox and cholera which were formerly endemic in the Islands, and the effect of these measures is notable upon the statistics of mortality, but such ills as malaria and the hook worm do not yield readily to treatment which can be easily applied. They contribute, however, one of the neglected causes of that prevailing indolence so generally deplored by western writers. Provident employers have already stopped berating the languid native and turned their attention to choosing workmen who are physically fit for toil. One of this class writes:

We do not let any laborers go down to Mindoro now, until they have passed a rigid medical examination, and we find a large percentage of the applicants for work ought to be in the hospital instead of trying to earn their living; it is simply impossible for such people to be efficient. A great deal has been accomplished in certain sections of the Islands in

²¹ Mary H. Fee, *A Woman's Impressions of the Philippines*. Chicago, 1910, p. 134.

²² *Phil. Com. Report*, 1909, p. 43.

improving sanitary conditions, but an enormous work still remains to be done.²³

Better nourishment and higher standards of social welfare will certainly reinforce the efforts of the health officer as the Islands develop in prosperity and the natives learn to satisfy their new-found desires from the wages of honest labor.

The various islands of the Philippine group divide the population very unequally. So long as communication between them was infrequent and difficult the common people seldom ventured away from their own villages, and Spanish policy rather encouraged a disposition to aloofness that rendered natives of different tribes and districts less liable to unite in uprisings against their rulers. Conservatism and timidity have been the natural result of this combination of physical and political causes, and to overcome them extra inducements have to be offered before the laborer can be got away from home. In the thickly populated Cebu five thousand men were gathered to dig the railroad bed at 25 cents per diem, but the same men could with difficulty be persuaded to do the same work in Panay, a hundred and fifty miles away, for the same pay with their keep included. But, though this is a common experience today all over the Islands, it is an obstacle that will disappear with increasing intelligence. An American familiar with the country writes:

When labor is required in such places, it simply means more money and more work to get a force, but I never heard of any work being permanently stopped for want of labor. I have heard a number of planters complain of lack of labor, but upon close questioning you generally find that they want to go back to the semi-slavery days, which of course is impossible. If planters would pay well and provide decent living quarters, schools, markets, etc., I have no doubt they could get all the labor they need.²⁴

The homesickness which renders a simple folk, unaccustomed to roam, miserable without their families, is easily overcome by transporting households to join the workmen in remote places—not a formidable operation in the Philippines.

A systematic effort to improve the mobility of labor was begun in the creation of a bureau of labor in 1908, and the equipment of free employment agencies in Manila and Iloilo, partly to induce laborers to leave over-populated islands for those where the people are less numerous and the wages higher. The results thus far have not been encouraging, "as

²³ Mr. C. R. Welch, in letter of November 28, 1913.

²⁴ Mr. C. H. Farnham, in letter of December 1, 1913.

the Filipino laborer seems to prefer discomfort in the place where he was born to comfort in a neighboring island within sight of his home."²⁵ But the best proof that the Filipino can be tempted abroad is the experiment of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association, begun in 1910, of recruiting their plantation hands in the Philippines. "For \$18 per month of twenty-six days and transportation both ways with their families the Filipinos readily accept contracts of five years and seem to be satisfied with their engagement and earnings."²⁶ There are now about 13,000 of them in the Hawaiian Islands, 8,216 of whom are employed on sugar plantations; 2200 of these are contractors and planters, being second in numbers to the Japanese among the nationalities who do this kind of work.²⁷ These Filipinos have earned unpleasant notoriety for the fre-

²⁵ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1910, p. 130.

²⁶ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1911, p. 128. The wage now given is \$20 per month.

²⁷ The following extracts from the *Report of the Bureau of Labor and Statistics of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association* for November, 1913, are of interest. "During this year the Association brought in a total of 4178 Filipinos. Departures from the Territory for the same period were 480. An examination of the returns of the plantations shows that Filipinos are as a whole performing fairly satisfactory labor. The reports for the month of August, 1913, show that on 17 plantations the Filipinos worked on an average less than 18 days; on 8 plantations they worked between 18 and 19 days; and on 20 plantations they worked 20 days and over. They work as many days per month, or a trifle better, in this respect, than the Koreans. They do not do as well as the Japanese or Portuguese, but it must be borne in mind that many of them are new arrivals and unaccustomed to performing hard work steadily. An encouraging feature is the disposition shown on their part to take up contracts. The number of Filipino contractors is increasing steadily.

"Thus far there has been no widespread movement on the part of Filipinos to leave the plantations and go to California. Their love of home draws them that way when they have saved sufficient money to make the trip, but 150 men, 4 women and 7 children went to the Coast during the year. This should be very carefully watched and every effort made to discourage the people going that way. A few went to the Coast and wrote back glowing reports to their friends on the plantations, with the result that, within a comparatively short time, there was a wholesale migration when the Japanese exodus to California started in about the same manner.

"Filipino emigration is in a very satisfactory condition. We are able to meet all requirements and as a matter of fact have had to crowd some of the plantations."

The fact that the Hawaiian Islands are an integral part of the United States renders the movement of Filipino laborers and residents to that Territory especially interesting. When they learn the profits to be earned by even the simplest out-door work they are certain to develop a larger ambition in the sale of their skilled labor and assist us as they assist themselves in the development of all the regions under our common flag where they are readily acclimated.

quency with which they appear in court, 1318 convictions against them being recorded in 1912. An analysis of the record shows, however, that most of the offences were not heinous and that many were due to ignorance of the law. A Honolulu newspaper says:

While it is not denied that there are criminals and loafers among them, the figures show that the vast majority who have come to Hawaii, unaccustomed to our methods of work and our social conditions, have become industrious and law-abiding, and a sense of justice should not fasten on these the responsibility for the deeds of the evil-doers.²⁸

Whatever may be argued from this rather unseemly phase of Filipino character the fact itself, that there are so many of them at work abroad, is sufficiently striking when we recall the dejected engineer of the Benguet road thirteen years ago. Progress in the attempt to solve the labor problem has been both satisfactory and rapid. The native displays the same desire to improve his condition that is found in every civilized country. He can do coarse labor, when properly treated, in his own country and abroad, in competition with Chinese and Japanese, but he is better fitted by nature for factory and artizan work. Mr. Farnham writes:

I went to the Philippines in 1901, and during that year and 1902 I had the direction of several hundred Filipino laborers on road and street construction; from 1906 to 1910 I had charge of large forces of Filipinos on railroad construction, and I can truly say that during this period of nearly ten years there has been a great development of labor, especially in the skilled trades. In 1901 there were very few Filipinos who were carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, etc., but in 1910 there were thousands who were fair workmen in these various trades. This improvement has come about through the employment of thousands on the various public works, railroads and other enterprises. At first, on all of this work, American, Chinese and other foreigners were employed in positions requiring skill and experience, and often the men employed were unreliable, so managers and superintendents of the various works were driven to the training of a force of Filipinos to do the work. . . . Thus there has been built up during the past ten years a considerable body of Filipino skilled labor. This practical training, which has come about through the law of necessity, has been at the same time supplemented by the trades schools of the educational department and the practical training carried on by the government in many of its departments, one of the greatest of which is the bureau of printing at Manila. From all this it may be seen that there has been a great advance in the skilled trades and a considerable gain by the Filipino people of useful and practical knowledge.²⁹

²⁸ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, June 26, 1913.

²⁹ Letter of December 1, 1913.

That characteristic American trait of idealism to which reference was made in the beginning of this paper is responsible for the determination at the outset to give every child in the Philippines an education. Our devotion to this one feature in the management of a dependency is the natural result of our experience at home, and the attention given to it contrasts rather significantly with the colonial policies of Holland and even of Great Britain. We may here dismiss all questions of morals and duty and confine ourselves to answering the objection often raised against an educated labor class—that wherever people are educated they refuse to perform manual labor. Society has nowhere authoritatively answered this objection. It is true that the only work illiterates in every community can expect to get is work with their hands, but where there are practically no illiterates and no immigration, as in Switzerland, work is still done. It would appear that while regular and necessary employment is the best school for a whole people, there is no reason why children before entering that school should not have the stimulus and advantage of elementary and theoretical instruction. It is not the education of a whole people, but of a particular class by itself which creates an aristocracy. While education is the possession of only a few these will naturally seek positions in offices and pose as aristocrats in fine clothing. The surest check to this in the Philippines is the avidity with which every father desires instruction for his children. When all are educated there will be no reason for one man to think himself better than another, and everyone then as now will have to work or starve. It is impossible to venture further upon a discussion of a mere speculation. We are determined to raise the standard of living and encourage progress generally for the benefit of a whole people; this cannot be done without education. The old idea that education freed a man from physical labor must be overcome by examples of material rewards which skilful labor may bring. The Philippine government in recognition of this is affording greater opportunities than ever before for vocational instruction in public schools. More than half of the 500,000 Filipino youths at school are now enrolled in industrial courses, “and the opportunities afforded generally for this important instruction compare favorably with opportunities for such education in the United States.”³⁰ It may be an old-fashioned idea, but thoughtful Americans still seek the remedy for poverty in raising the standards of desire and living among the poor. If it ruins the labor market for a time and even encourages revolution by increas-

³⁰ *Phil. Com. Report*, 1912, p. 20.

ing discontent we are willing, we think, to risk it if the ambition of the people can be strengthened. Neither the paternalism which provides land and labor nor the legislative philanthropy which assists the unfortunate is of much avail unless men are stirred to exercise their own will power.

So far as the labor problem in the Philippines admits of a solution the facts before us and the experience thus far gained would seem to warrant our holding to the policy thus far pursued. That policy, as has been indicated, is founded upon principles so deeply implanted in the sentiment of the American people that no political party would venture to incur the risk of seeming to contravene them. Our venture in the East is derided by some and deplored by others, and there is no way as yet of justifying either its opponents or its friends. But while we continue the venture the difficulties and responsibilities must be assumed and our duty done regardless of our personal prejudices, with an eye single only to our national honor. We have the advantage of other countries whose experience we are able to consider to our profit while recognizing the impossibility of departing from our theory of occupation in accepting some of their methods. A greater advantage accrues from the scientific knowledge of the age which admits of applying plans of relief and education undreamed of a century ago. By reason of these advantages and a just and equitable procedure we entertain the reasonable hope that after a period of expert control not excessively prolonged we may leave inhabitants of the Philippines in a position to govern and defend themselves. Unless they can do both of these things they will constitute a danger to the peace of the world.

The introduction of any considerable number of foreign laborers into the country is likely to be attended with such inconvenience or danger to its ultimate welfare that we are disposed to avoid such a step even at the risk of delaying the development of its natural resources. From this brief examination of the factors involved in the problem the obvious conclusion seems to justify the American policy of a common-school education for all classes alike. Such a thing has never before been tried in any oriental country except Japan, and there its results are already sufficiently notable to be encouraging. With the spread of education the ignorance and conservatism of the past will disappear; with the change may come other evils we know not of, but from our acquaintance with the social problem elsewhere we are bound to believe that the perils of divine discontent in an intelligent populace are less than the dangers of illiteracy. Education is necessary for a people who have to turn their hands

to all the varied uses to which labor can be put, whatever may be said for the restricted occupations allowed by the Dutch for their agricultural subjects in Java. If we wish to train them, not only for their plantations but for life, we must assume the responsibility we have taken of training them as we train our own children at home. When this is accomplished they will realize, as they do not now, that the fundamental lesson of civilization is the lesson of labor usefully applied.